



Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov
Barney S. Heath
Director

Community Preservation Committee

MINUTES

9 October 2018

The meeting was held on Tuesday, 9 October 2018 starting at 7:00 pm in Newton City Hall Room 204.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC below) members present: chair Peter Sargent, vice chair Mark Armstrong, and members Dan Brody, Byron Dunker, Beryl Gilfix, Rick Kronish, Susan Lunin, and Jennifer Molinsky. Member Robert Maloney was absent.

Community Preservation Program Manager Alice Ingerson served as recorder.

[Blue, underlined phrases](#) below are links to additional information online.

PUBLIC HEARING

[Stanton Avenue Senior Housing / Golda Meir House Expansion](#) – Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly (JCHE) proposal requesting \$3.25 million in CPA funds to add 60 income- and age- restricted units of rental housing (out of a net total of 69 new units)

For JCHE, Lizbeth Heyer, Chief of Real Estate, and Zoe Weinrobe, Director of Real Estate Innovation, made this presentation. JCHE Board member Harold Tubman and Golda Meir Director Myra Marshall also attended.

Heyer thanked the City of Newton for making the land at its Stanton Avenue water tower available for this project and the neighborhood's City councilors for their leadership. She described JCHE's mission as helping people age in a dynamic and supportive community, with a focus on ending loneliness and extending seniors' ability to live independently. Although about 40% of all JCHE residents are nursing home eligible, only about 2% move to a nursing home each year. The average annual household income for JCHE tenants is about \$11,000, and 90% of JCHE units are subsidized by the federal Dept. of Housing and Urban Development's former "202" program for extremely low-income households. The organization raises about \$3 million annually to subsidize services and operations.

Heyer and Weinrobe explained that plans for 81,500 square feet in two additions to Golda Meir House reflected extensive consultation neighbors, including the hospital and Braeburn Country Club. The additions will match the existing building's exterior height to minimize impacts on abutting properties, and its interior floors, so new and existing units will feel like a single community. A new entrance will provide at-grade accessibility from the upper parking lot. Parking will expand to maintain the existing ratio of residents to parking spaces. Neighbors' concerns about traffic and parking are also being addressed by moving street parking along the Golda Meir side of Stanton Avenue onto JCHE's property and by locating the 3,000 square foot wellness center as close as possible to Washington Street.

Most of the net 69 new units will be restricted to seniors and will also be income-restricted: 8 units for households with up to 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI), 22 up to 50% AMI, 20 up to 60% AMI, and 10 up to 99% AMI, the maximum for CPA eligibility. JCHE will seek project-based vouchers through Section 8 and the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program to fill the gap between what its lowest-income residents can afford and the units' listed rents. As required by the City as a condition for selling the water tower, the project will also include 9 units for chronically homeless individuals with disabilities, who will receive supportive services from [Hearth, Inc.](#) Of the project's 4 (3) units without income restrictions, 1 will be for a resident manager and

website www.newtonma.gov/cpa

contact Alice E. Ingerson, Community Preservation Program Manager

email aingerson@newtonma.gov phone 617.796.1144

*Minutes
continue on
next page.*

2 (1) will be for New England Conservatory (NEC) graduate students, who will receive academic credit for providing music education, performance and other programming for residents. (*Staff note:* Changes in parentheses above reflect [the slightly revised unit mix submitted on 8 November 2018](#), approved by the CPC by a vote of 8-0 on 13 November 2018.)

All new residents will benefit from Golda Meir's existing strong supportive services program, including the daily lunch program, fitness and wellness, 28 intergenerational programs, and cooperation with Newton-Wellesley Hospital, where about 70% of current residents turn for health care. The wellness center is being planned in partnership with the hospital and will offer nursing care and geriatric care management to both Golda Meir residents and others in the community. This center will generate rental revenue, and JCHE hopes that its construction cost will be borne by the hospital.

Weinrobe said the project's total development cost (TDC), excluding the wellness center but including the costly steel and concrete construction required to match the existing building, was about \$425,000 per unit. She felt this was in line with other projects recently supported by Newton's CPA program. The building will also meet Enterprise Green Communities standards. She noted that JCHE has been recognized for its pioneering achievements in green development. She expected the current estimate of utility rebates to increase.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

As their president, Sue Flicop explained that the League of Women Voters of Newton supported this proposal overall. The League readers applauded the project's intention to meet LEED Silver standards and their services partnership with Hearth, Inc. She also summarized their questions about the proposal, though some had been touched on in the presentation: What happens if housing voucher funding changes, or if a resident's income decreases? Should more of the units be fully accessible, rather than just adaptable for accessibility? Could more of the two-bedroom units be income-restricted? Is transportation provided for Golda Meir to locations they cannot access via the abutting Woodland stop on the Green D line?

City Councilor Christopher Markiewicz acknowledged that this was a large request but felt it was exactly the kind of proposal Newton CPA funds should support. He was glad the project would not be limited to seniors. He had been impressed when he toured the current facility and met with residents.

Nancy Zollers spoke on behalf of Engine 6, a group of residents who support affordable housing. They also considered this project a perfect use of CPA funds, for multiple reasons: JCHE's neighborhood outreach, the partnership with Newton-Wellesley Hospital, and finally providing the 9 units for the chronically homeless that had originally been proposed for the former Engine 6 fire station on Beacon Street before the City ended consideration of that proposal.

Sandra Lingley, a resident of Curve Street, spoke on behalf of a friend with hearing loss who works at home in her unit on the fourth floor of the Woodland Station Apartments, for whom the current rehabilitation construction at Golda Meir House had been hugely disruptive. She hoped JCHE would keep the promise made by the expansion project's architect at one community meeting, to move the staging area for construction away from these apartments.

Joyce Picard, of 14 Halcyon Road, praised the JCHE staff as highly professional. She would like to see more units in the new development without income restrictions. Much of Newton's housing is very old, and there are very limited options for seniors seeking to remain in the community who cannot qualify for deed-restricted housing, but who also cannot afford the market-rate rents in Newton's new, high-end developments.

Several current Golda Meir residents spoke enthusiastically about the building's strong sense of community, ethnic diversity, wonderful dining and enrichment activities, and welcome recent renovations. Resident Barbara Ochs said many current residents in their 90s or even over 100 were very active but would very much welcome an infusion of younger residents. Phyllis Chmara described the Golda community as "amazing."

On behalf of the Council on Aging, Alison Sharma strongly supported the proposal because it would help to meet the needs of Newton's senior population, which is projected to grow by roughly 30% between now and 2030. She characterized the project as worthwhile and progressive.

Longtime JCHE board member Harold Tubman, 33 Rosslyn Road, spoke in support of the project.

On behalf of Newton's Fair Housing Committee, its chair Kathy Laufer supported the proposal but had several questions: Of the 10 two-bedroom units, why were none designated for households in the lowest income category (up to 30% AMI) but 3 designated for the resident manager and NEC students? Since the fully accessible units will be offered first to current residents, could more fully accessible units be provided for new residents? For the 9 chronically homeless residents: How will JCHE modify its normal tenant selection process or criteria, especially if some applicants have histories of criminal activity or substance abuse? Will these residents' units be clustered together or distributed throughout the building? Will supportive services for these residents be provided by the resident manager as a JCHE employee, or by Hearth, Inc. as an outside contractor?

In response to Peter Sargent, Alice Ingerson agreed to provide JCHE staff with a summary of the various questions asked at the hearing or submitted in writing, for a brief written response. In the meantime, Heyer answered some of these questions:

JCHE's goal is to provide not only physical but also financial support to allow residents to remain in their units as long as possible, despite changes in their circumstances. The project's homeless residents will be referred by Hearth, Inc. All of the project's units are adaptable for wheelchair users: they have showers rather than tubs and kitchen sink cabinets that can be removed easily for "roll-under" use. JCHE would love to create more fully wheelchair-accessible units. However, these units exceed the size standards for state affordable housing funds. JCHE's executive director is currently serving on the governor's task force that is working to update the state's standards, so the fundable square footage limits will allow for full accessibility.

Finally, Heyer said the contractor for the current \$30 million renovation of Golda Meir House had worked to limit the project's impact on both residents and neighbors. JCHE is keenly aware that the expansion project will involve several more years more of noise and potential inconvenience. They will work with the contractor to design thoughtful a construction management plan.

CPC COMMENTS

In response to Beryl Gilfix, Heyer said JCHE would ask their contractor to look into the how hospitals used "silent construction" to limit the impact of noise on patients. She also explained that the project would request state approval of the maximum possible preference for Newton residents, at 70%, though it would have to build a new waiting list and lottery.

In response to Mark Armstrong, Heyer confirmed that the City's RFP for the sale of the water tower parcel required including 9 homeless units to satisfy the City's agreement with the federal government for the units not built by the Engine 6 project. In addition, JCHE's cost to demolish the tower had been credited toward its purchase price for the City parcel.

Dan Brody summarized his question, which Ingerson had distributed to JCHE in advance of the hearing: how might JCHE wish it had modified its current plans for the expansion, if transportation changes over the next twenty or more years meant it could build additional housing on land now used for parking? Heyer said JCHE looked forward to possibly expanding housing on the site even more in the future, but that current plans need not be changed to allow for that. Only about 25% of Golda Meir residents have cars now. In response to Rick Kronish, Weinrobe said there was not currently a waiting list for parking spots. Heyer said JCHE looked forward to possibly expanding housing on the site even more in the future.

In response to Sargent, Heyer said Golda Meir provided van transportation to malls, grocery stores, and evening programs, including the Boston Symphony. Several of the Golda Meir residents and Ingerson explained

that the Newton Senior Center also provided subsidized taxi vouchers for Newton seniors, which cost \$2 per ride to almost any destination in Newton.

Jennifer Molinsky knew and admired JCHE through her professional work at Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies. She applauded JCHE for learning from affordable housing models around the world. She also felt the shrinkage of other, longstanding funding programs for affordable housing strengthened the case for CPA funding of this project.

In response to a question from Molinsky, Golda Meir Director Myra Marshall said the building did not have space for live-in aides, but that residents' needs were met well in other ways. Her staff included two social workers. Many residents were eligible for services through [Springwell](#), and others were served effectively by "live-out" aides, who found the building easy to access.

In response to Kronish, Heyer provided an overview of substantial changes in the organization's finances over the past few years and its future strategic plans. JCHE owns and operates housing for 1,500 residents in 4 greater Boston communities. Over the past 6 years JCHE has been modernizing and expanding its portfolio and resident services by using tax credits and tax-exempt bonds, as well as by refinancing/accessing equity in its properties. Over the next 10-15 years JCHE aims to grow its current 1,200 units to about 2,060, including moderate-income housing for people who are not eligible for subsidized housing but cannot afford market-rate assisted living. Some of the increased operating funds documented in the proposal came from developer fees on new projects, but some came from shifting from older programs under which all operating surpluses had to be returned to the federal Dept. of Housing and Urban Development to new programs that allowed JCHE to reinvest these funds in its own portfolio. Core operations are paid for by revenue, but services and programs are subsidized through fundraising. Heyer said JCHE had built a very strong real estate team, with the capacity to manage multiple, overlapping projects. Sargent felt that JCHE's growth would nevertheless be constrained by the limited availability of affordable housing tax credits, which are very competitive.

Kronish expected payments from federally funded vouchers to be reduced over time for all affordable housing projects, and that vouchers would increasingly be used in lower-cost communities, as the number of low-income households qualified for vouchers declined in affluent communities. Heyer agreed: the reduction from about \$13,000 to \$9,500 per year per unit as the annual operating standard cost for tax credit projects had forced housing providers to bridge that gap. She felt project-based vouchers would be the last cut, because their payment standard was built into project financing, but she expected mobile vouchers that tenants can use in any community to be cut or lost completely.

VOTE Gilfix moved, and Molinsky seconded, a motion to recommend the \$3.25 million of CPA funding requested for the expansion of Golda Meir House, for appropriation to the control of the Newton Planning & Development Department, for a grant to Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly, subject to the usual conditions in CPA grant agreements and additional timing conditions, including a second CPC vote to authorize execution of a grant agreement once all other funds required to complete the project were committed (see attachment to these minutes) and requiring JCHE to re-start the CPA process from scratch if tax credits were not committed for the project within 2 years.

The motion was adopted by a vote of 7 in favor, 1 abstaining (Kronish) and 1 absent (Robert Maloney).

Kronish asked to explain the reasons for his abstention. As a commissioner for the Newton Housing Authority and its statutory representative on the CPC, he had great respect for JCHE's work and services, but he was concerned that the Golda Meir House Expansion project would compete directly with the Authority's Haywood House project in the upcoming state funding round. The state was extremely unlikely to award housing tax credits to both projects in the same year. He felt that the Authority, as a much smaller organization than JCHE, simply could not afford to lose the approximately \$1 million it had already invested in its Haywood House plans, as might happen if that project did not move forward promptly. The need for affordable senior housing

in Newton clearly justified both projects, but Kronish felt that the City of Newton and the CPC should have scheduled their support to keep the two projects from competing simultaneously for state funds.

In addition, Kronish believed that some past JCHE projects had hired contractors or subcontractors who had failed to meet applicable labor and safety standards on other, non-JCHE projects. He hoped the Golda Meir House expansion would not involve these firms.

Committee Business

Ingerson introduced Catherine Farrell, Esq., as the consulting attorney who had been engaged with the remaining consulting funds from the CPC's Fy18 administrative budget, as approved unanimously at the Committee's June 2018 meeting, to complete the conservation restrictions required by the CPA statute (MGL Ch. 44B) for several past CPA-funded land acquisitions in Newton. Ingerson reviewed her staff memo about a potential proposal from the Newton Conservators for CPA funding of costs associated with holding these restrictions. Though her memo envisioned that these restrictions would include 30 Wabasso Street (Flowed Meadow Conservation Area), 20 Rogers Street (Crystal Lake), and Kessler Woods, she now believed a proposal would need to be submitted separately for Kessler Woods.

Ingerson recommended executing a single grant agreement between the City and the Conservators for the CPA funds associated with holding all of these restrictions, with generic procedures for communication between the two parties about the use of these funds. She also thought that with such an agreement in place, the Conservators should hold the funds directly rather than through a third-party escrow agreement or having to request release of funds by the City for each specific use. Details specific to each site, such as prohibited and allowed uses, would be included in the restrictions themselves. Ingerson noted that the City would always be obligated to do some things at no direct cost to the Conservators, such as defending the boundaries of public open space or parks against trespass.

Since the Conservators' funding request would be in response to requirements in the CPA statute and to work on these outstanding conservation restrictions that the CPC itself had initiated and funded, Ingerson asked the Committee whether it would waive the normal requirement for a pre-proposal from the Conservators and/or accept the Conservators' full proposal even it were submitted slightly less than the usually required 1 month before the requested hearing date.

VOTE: Sargent moved, and Armstrong seconded, waiving the pre-proposal requirement and adjusting the 1-month-in-advance requirement for a proposal from the Newton Conservators for costs associated with holding conservation restrictions on certain past CPA-funded land acquisitions by the City of Newton, contingent on receiving that proposal as early as possible before the requested hearing date. The motion was approved by a vote of 7 in favor, 1 abstaining (Dan Brody, as a member of the Newton Conservators' board), 1 absent (Maloney).

The Committee briefly discussed a letter received from the citizens' group Livable Newton expressing fair housing concerns about the design, finishes, location and marketing of affordable units at Hancock Estates, the multifamily housing associated with the CPA-funded [Kessler Woods](#) project in south Newton. Sargent and Kronish agreed that the issues raised by Livable Newton seemed quite serious, but Sargent explained that the resolution of these issues fell not to the CPC but to the City of Newton as the project's permitting authority.

Ingerson explained that all CPA funding for Kessler Woods had been appropriated for the purchase of open space, with the affordable housing as a supplemental benefit to be obtained without direct CPA funding. This approach left the CPC itself with no direct influence over when or how the housing was built. As a "lesson to be learned" from this project, Ingerson recommended reversing this approach in the future. In other words, CPA funds should be appropriated directly for community benefits such as housing, which depended on additional, non-CPA funding and approvals, with any supplemental benefits as conditions for the initial release of those CPA funds.

Ingerson then introduced Adrienne Hartzell, Managing Director of the Newton Cultural Alliance (NCA), which had to date received a commitment of \$2.3 million in CPA funding for its Allen House Historic Rehabilitation project in West Newton. Hartzell summarize her written letter of intent to submit a pre-proposal for supplemental funding of that project, which faced a significant shortfall due to the combination of recent changes affecting historic tax credits and the current construction market, in which bids were coming in substantially above prior estimates for projects of many different types. Since NCA was not requesting any waivers of the CPC's published, standard procedures and deadlines, the CPC agreed that no vote was required. The Committee also asked Ingerson to arrange a site visit to Allen House, since most current CPC members had not been members when the project was originally funded.

Ingerson reported that a meeting scheduled for 24 September 2018 with Executive Office staff, the CPC officers and herself, to discuss closer coordination between the City's [Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#) and the [Community Preservation Plan](#), had been canceled when it became clear that it had not been added to the calendars of key Executive Office participants.

Since the new five-year *CIP* would be presented to the City Council in mid-October, however, Ingerson suggested that the CPC reserve time at its 13 November 2018 meeting to review the *CIP*'s new list of potential CPA proposals, in light of the guidelines and targets in the *Community Preservation Plan*. She felt this exercise would be helpful both for understanding the potential City projects listed as CPA-eligible in the *CIP* and for testing the practicality of the *Community Preservation Plan*'s new guidelines for "CPA appropriateness." By sense of the meeting, the Committee agreed to undertake this exercise.

Ingerson announced that on 28 October 2018, there would be a small opening ceremony for the restored historical ornamental pond and the new, historically-inspired bridge at [Farlow Park](#) in Newton Corner. Over the years, this project had received significant CPA and CDBG funding. CPC members were welcome to attend this event without confirming formally in advance. A larger celebration would be organized in spring 2019.

Ingerson also reported that at the latest meeting of the Newton Historical Commission (NHC), representatives of the [New Art Center](#) had announced that they did not intend to implement CPA-funded preservation/rehabilitation plan for their historic building. For the CPC's records, Ingerson had requested a copy of the minutes from this NHC meeting.

Based on a motion by Armstrong, seconded by Molinsky, the minutes for 13 September 2018 were approved as submitted, by a vote of 7 in favor, 1 abstaining (Susan Lunin, because she had not attended this meeting), and 1 absent (Maloney).

The Committee adjourned by consensus at 8:50 pm.